

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11) Publication number:

0 342 747 B1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

(43) Date of publication of patent specification: **27.07.94** (51) Int. Cl.⁵: **H01H 13/02, G02B 6/00**

(21) Application number: **89201205.5**

(22) Date of filing: **12.05.89**

(54) **Directed optical signaling.**

(30) Priority: **18.05.88 NL 8801274**

(43) Date of publication of application:
23.11.89 Bulletin 89/47

(45) Publication of the grant of the patent:
27.07.94 Bulletin 94/30

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB SE

(56) References cited:
DE-A- 2 825 833 DE-A- 3 202 080
DE-U- 8 437 099 FR-A- 2 477 764
US-A- 4 052 591 US-A- 4 683 359

(73) Proprietor: **N.V. Philips' Gloeilampenfabrieken**
Groenewoudseweg 1
NL-5621 BA Eindhoven(NL)

(72) Inventor: **Braakman, Herman Wichert**
Theodoor
c/o INT. OCTROOIBUREAU B.V.
Prof. Holstlaan 6
NL-5656 AA Eindhoven(NL)

(74) Representative: **De Jongh, Cornelis**
Dominicus et al
INTERNATIONAAL OCTROOIBUREAU B.V.,
Prof. Holstlaan 6
NL-5656 AA Eindhoven (NL)

Note: Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid (Art. 99(1) European patent convention).

EP 0 342 747 B1

Description

The invention relates to a keyboard comprising at least one key that has a vertical recess and at some distance below the recess in the keyboard a light source for marking a condition defined by the key, with a light conducting body arranged in the recess, the light conducting body having a top forming the exit opening of a light beam, coming from the light source, the top located substantially in the topface of the key and having a bottom directed towards the light source.

The invention also relates to a keyboard key having a recess through a striking face thereof which key comprises a light conducting body for conducting light from a light source to be located below the key through the body to an observer for observing light emerging from the body, the light conducting body extending within the key in a direction substantially perpendicular to the striking face, whereby a topface of the light conducting body extends through the recess and coincides substantially with the striking face, and a bottom of the light conducting body is directed towards the light source when the key is mounted in the keyboard.

A keyboard with such a key is known from DE-U-8437099. Therein a light conducting body is used to lead the light from the light-source mounted in the keyboard relatively far under the key to the top of the key. A drawback of this configuration is the limited angle of view of the outgoing light beam and the less favourable direction for the operator.

A lightswitching key with a light conducting body is known from DE-A-2825833. Since in this case the operator observing the key can be at any place, the key described here has a wide angle of outgoing light. This is mainly achieved by the shape of the key. A drawback of this configuration is that the light is not directed in a specific direction as would be preferable for a keyboard key, because in this case the operator finds himself substantially in front of the keyboard.

It is an object of the invention to widen the angle of the outgoing light and to direct it at the same time towards the operator.

Thereto the invention is characterised in that the bottom comprises a first facet and a second facet, the first facet having a first surface formed such that the light pulled in by the first facet runs substantially parallel with a first side face of the light conducting body bounding this refraction plane and a first light beam emerges from the top with a first angle, and the second facet having a second surface, which is curved such that it has a focal point lying within the light conducting body, the focal point forming a virtual light source, from

which a second light beam emerges through the top with a second angle substantially adjacent to the first angle as a result of which the light coming from the light source is emerged in a desired direction and the angle of exit exceeds the angle of entry from the light conducting body.

In this context it is highly advantageous that the light conducting body together with the key cap can be spray-painted as a whole. The invention is based on the understanding that by means of the facets at least one virtual light source is created not coinciding with the light source as a result of which the angle of exit exceeds the angle of entry of the light and whose position determines the desired direction of transmission.

An advantageous embodiment of a keyboard according to the invention is characterized in that the second facet has a position such that the light pulled in is reflected against the first side face in the light conducting body before it emerges therefrom. The light pulled in by the second facet emerges on the other side of the light pulled in by the first facet than in the case, that it is not reflected.

A further embodiment of a keyboard according to the invention is characterized in that a third facet is arranged between the second facet and a second lateral face facing the first lateral face wherein the third facet has a bent surface which is arranged in a manner such that the light pulled in is reflected against the second lateral face and the first lateral face in this order, before emerging at a third angle, which is substantially adjacent to the second angle of exit. This is advantageous in that a further enhancement of the overall angle of exit is realised in a simple way.

The invention and its advantages will be further explained with reference to the embodiments represented in the drawing Figures, whereas corresponding components are designated by the same reference numerals and in which:

Fig. 1 shows a keyboard in accordance with the invention;

Fig. 2 shows a key of the keyboard according to the invention;

Fig. 3 shows a first embodiment of the light conducting body in a key of the keyboard according to the invention;

Fig. 4 shows a further embodiment of a light conducting body in a keyboard according to the invention;

Fig. 5 shows a preferred embodiment of a light conducting body of a keyboard according to the invention.

The keyboard 1 represented in Fig. 1 comprises a large number of keys used for operating individual functions.

In addition to the homecomputer belonging to the keyboard represented in Fig. 1 there are many advanced electronic apparatuses in which many functions have to be operated, for example, with advanced technology telephone sets, personal computers, "minitel" equipment, medical equipment etc.

In order to maintain the smallest possible number of keys for controlling these apparatuses double functions are assigned to keys, for example small letters and capitals or a different type of alphabet etc.

The conversions of these functions are effected in the embodiment by means of the keys 2, 3 and 4.

In this respect it is necessary to visualize the fact that these functions are switched on or off.

To avoid these keys being fixed in specific positions, as is customary in the case of mechanical keyboards, a light marking is applied to this advanced equipment so that no more than a single type of switches linked with the keys can be applied to the whole keyboard.

Such a key 2, comprising light marking, is represented in a diagram in Fig. 2. This key comprises a key cap 5 provided on a switch-on 6, of a switch not shown anyfurther.

In prior art keyboards the key has a vertical recess 7, possibly covered by a transparent plastic layer to avoid impurities. Perpendicularly below the recess 7 is a light source, for example a light emitting diode (LED) or the end of a "fibre" coupled to a light source arranged at some distance.

The light source 8 has an angle of aperture α at which the light leaves the light source 8. In order to guarantee a free stroke of the key the recess 7 is introduced at some distance above the light source 8, so that on the one hand only a small portion of the light of the light source 8 will pass through the recess 7 and on the other hand the light leaves the recess 7 in line with the axis connecting light source 8 with the recess 7, so that a keyboard operator will see not more than the stray light caused by the edges of the opening 7.

To improve visibility, a light conducting body 9 is inserted in the recess.

Such a light conducting body 9-1 can have multiple forms provided that the side facing the light source comprises no less than two facets for magnifying in the desired direction the angle of exit of accepted light by the formation of at least one virtual additional light source. In a particularly advantageous embodiment the light conducting body 9-1 has the form of a truncated range, as shown in Fig. 3. This light conducting body has a top side 10-1, called the exit opening, from where the pulled-in light leaves. This top side is preferably situated in the top face of the key 2, 3 or 4 as is also

represented in Fig. 2. Furthermore, the light conducting body 9-1 is bounded by a first side 11-1, a second side 12-1 and a bottom side called the entrance and divided up into facets 13-1 and 14-1. The depth (not shown) of the light conducting body 9 can be chosen at random, but will generally correspond with the height of the entrance opening because the light beam coming from the source is generally rotationally symmetrical. The bottom side is preferably so wide as to have the light conducting body 9-1 pull in at an angle of radiation α substantially all the light emitted by the light source 8-1 represented in the diagram.

The bottom side is divided up into a member of facets in this embodiment being a number of two 13-1 and 14-1. The surface of facets 13 is chosen to be flat in all embodiments but can also have a suitably bent shape. The surface of facet 13-1 is positioned relative to the incident light beam such that the incident light without being reflected to one of the side 11-1 and 12-1 exits at a first angle through the entire exit opening. This implies that the light pulled in by facet 13-1 runs substantially parallel with the first side 11-1. The surface of facet 14-1 is bent and has such a position relative to the incident light and such a curve that the light beam incident on this surface 14-1 leaves the exit opening 10-1 as a divergent light beam, which is to say that it has a focus located within the light conducting body or a series of foci. In addition, the position of the surface facet 14-1 is chosen such that the associated light beam exits at a second angle β , which substantially matches the light beam at the angle δ coming from the first facet 13-1.

By using the light conducting body 9-1, comprising an entrance opening having facets 13-1 and 14-1, the following advantages are obtained. Firstly substantially all the light emitted by the light source 8-1 leaves through the exit opening 10-1 so that a maximum light intensity is realised. Secondly the light leaves the exit opening 10-1 at a larger angle ($\delta + \beta$) than the angle at which it is pulled in (α) obtaining an improved angle of sight ($\delta + \beta$). Finally, the overall angle ($\delta + \beta$) at which the light leaves is situated on substantially one side of the line 19 (see fig. 2) between the light source 8-1 and the heart of the exit opening 10-1 so that with a proper positioning of the light conducting body 9-1 in the key 2, 3 or 4 the light is emitted substantially to the front, which is to say in the direction of an operator sitting at the keyboard 1.

An improvement is obtained by using the conducting body 9-2 represented in fig. 4.

This light conducting body 9-2 is, except for the facet 14-2, substantially identical with the light conducting body 9-1 represented in Fig. 3.

The facet 14-2 has such a curve and such a position that the light beam hitting this facet leaves the exit opening 10-2 also as a divergent light beam but after being reflected against the side face 11-2 in the light conducting body 9-2. The position of facet 14-2 is then selected such that the angle β -2 at which the light emerges virtually matches the emerging light at the angled δ which is pulled in by the facet 13-2.

By making use of the reflection against the side face 11-2 which orders on facet 13-2 the following advantages are obtained.

In the first place this enables the light pulled in by facet 14-2 to emerge on the other side of the light pulled in by facet 13-2 than in the embodiment represented in fig. 3, at which a positioning in the key 2, 3 or 4 is realised turned through 180° along the longitudinal axis of the wedge-like conducting body. In the second place this enables an enlarged exit angle β -2 because due to the reflection of the side face 11-2 a virtual light source is realised which forms a much larger angle to the perpendicular on the top face 10-2 than as possible in the embodiment represented in Fig. 3.

A further improvement is obtained by distributing the entrance opening over a plurality of facets instead of two, for example for the three facets as represented in Fig. 5. The light conducting body 9-3 represented in this Figure corresponds with the light conducting body 9-2 shown in fig. 4 except for the facet 15-3. The facet 15-3 has a position such that the light entering this facet 15-3 originating from the light source 8-3 is reflected twice, that is to say a first time against the second side face 12-3 and a second time against the first side face 11-3. This makes the light emerging from the exit 10-3 apparently originate from a virtual light source which forms an even larger angle to the perpendicular on the plane of the exit opening 10-3 than the afore-described virtual light source of the emerging light pulled in by facet 14-3. In addition, the curve of facet 15-3 is chosen such that a diverging light beam leaves the exit opening 10-3 at an angle γ and the position of facet 15-3 and of the second reflecting side face 12-3 is chosen with respect to the first reflecting side face 11-3 such that the angle γ at which the light emerges substantially matches the angle β -2 at which the light emerges and is pulled in by facet 14-3.

When positioning the light conducting body 9-3 as shown in Fig. 5, in a key 2, 3 or 4 in a way as represented in fig. 2, an operator of the keyboard diagrammatically represented in Fig. 2 by an eye 16, will always find himself in the outgoing light beam of which the boundary lines are represented in fig. 2 by means of dashed lines 17 and 18.

From the light conducting body 9-3 represented in Fig. 5 the side face 12-3 is deepened over a

portion 12-4 so as to remove the difference between the position of the reflecting portion of side wall 12-3 and the height of the exit opening 10-03. This variation can naturely be realised in a great many ways.

It will be evident that an even larger number of facets having multiple reflection against the side faces 11 and 12 is possible for realising a still wider emerging light beam.

In addition, it is possible also in the depth (that is to say perpendicular to the face in the drawings) to realise the facets and/or the exit face in a bent shape so that also the light beam will diverge in the plane perpendicular to the drawing.

The light emitting body 9 can be separately manufactured and installed in the key 2, 3 or 4. However, it is equally feasible to manufacture the light conducting body 9 together with the key cap 5 as one complete injection moulding.

Claims

1. A keyboard (1) comprising at least one key (2) that has a vertical recess (7) and at some distance below the recess (7) in the keyboard (1) a light source (8) for marking a condition defined by the key (2), with a light conducting body (9) arranged in the recess (7), the light conducting body (9) having a top (10) forming the exit opening of a light beam, coming from the light source (8), the top (10) located substantially in the topface of the key (2), and having a bottom directed towards the light source (8), characterized in that the bottom comprises a first facet (13) and a second facet (14), the first facet (13) having a first surface formed such that the light pulled in by the first facet (13) runs substantially parallel with a first side face (11) of the light conducting body (9) bounding this refraction plane and a first light beam emerges from the top (10) with a first angle (δ), and the second facet (14) having a second surface, which is curved such that it has a focal point lying within the light conducting body (9), the focal point forming a virtual light source, from which a second light beam emerges through the top (10) with a second angle (β) substantially adjacent to the first angle (δ) as a result of which the light coming from the light source (8) is emerged in a desired direction and the angle of exit exceeds the angle of entry (α) from the light conducting body (9).
2. A keyboard (1) as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the second facet (14-2) has a position such that the pulled in light is reflected against the first side face (11-2) in the

light conducting body (9-2) before it emerges therefrom.

3. A keyboard (1) as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that a third facet (15-3) is arranged between the second facet (14-3) and a second lateral face (12-3) facing the first lateral face (11-3) wherein the third facet (15-3) has a bent surface which is arranged in a manner such that the light pulled in is reflected against the second lateral face (12-3) and the first lateral face (11-3), in this order, before emerging at a third angle (γ), which is substantially adjacent to the second angle of exit (β -2).
4. A keyboard key (2) having a recess (7) through a striking face thereof which key (2) comprises a light conducting body (9) for conducting light from a light source (8) to be located below the key (2) through the body (9) to an observer for observing light emerging from the body (9), the light conducting body (9) extending within the key (2) in a direction substantially perpendicular to the striking face, whereby a topface (10) of the light conducting body (9) extends through the recess (7) and coincides substantially with the striking face, and a bottom of the light conducting body (9) is directed towards the light source (8) when the key (2) is mounted in the keyboard (1), characterized in that the bottom comprises a first facet (13) and a second facet (14), the first facet (13) having a first surface formed such that the light pulled in by the first facet (13) runs substantially parallel with a first side face (11) of the light conducting body (9) bounding this refraction plane and a first light beam emerges from the top (10) with a first angle (δ), and the second facet (14) having a second surface, which is curved such that it has a focal point lying within the light conducting body (9), the focal point forming a virtual light source, from which a second light beam emerges through the top (10) with a second angle (β) substantially adjacent to the first angle (δ) as a result of which the light coming from the light source (8) is emerged in a desired direction and the angle of exit exceeds the angle of entry (α) from the light conducting body (9).

Patentansprüche

1. Tastenpult (1) mit mindestens einer Taste (2) mit einer vertikalen Ausnehmung (7) und einer in einem Abstand unterhalb der Ausnehmung (7) in dem Tastenpult vorgesehenen Lichtquelle (8) zur Markierung eines durch die Taste

(2) definierten Zustandes, wobei in der Ausnehmung (7) ein Lichtleitkörper (9) vorgesehen ist, dessen oberes Ende (10) die Ausgangsöffnung eines von der Lichtquelle (8) herrührenden Lichtstrahles bildet, wobei dieses obere Ende (10) im wesentlichen in der oberen Fläche der Taste (2) liegt und der Boden desselben der Lichtquelle (8) zugewandt ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Boden eine erste Facette (13) und eine zweite Facette (14) aufweist, wobei die erste Facette (13) eine erste Oberfläche hat, die derart gebildet ist, daß das durch die erste Facette (13) eingefangene Licht sich im wesentlichen parallel zu der ersten Seitenfläche (11) des Lichtleitkörpers (9) erstreckt, welche Fläche die Brechungsebene begrenzt, und ein erster Lichtstrahl mit einem ersten Winkel (δ) von dem oberen Ende (10) ausgeht und wobei die zweite Facette (14) eine zweite Fläche hat, die derart gekrümmt ist, daß ihr Brennpunkt innerhalb des Lichtleitkörpers (9) liegt, wobei der Brennpunkt eine virtuelle Lichtquelle bildet, von der ein zweiter Lichtstrahl durch das obere Ende (10) mit einem zweiten Winkel (β) ausgeht, der im wesentlichen an den ersten Winkel (δ) grenzt, wodurch das von der Lichtquelle herrührende Licht in einer gewünschten Richtung ausgestrahlt wird und der Austrittswinkel größer ist als der Eintrittswinkel (α) des Lichtleitkörpers (9).

2. Tastenpult (1) nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die zweite Facette (14-2) eine derartige Lage hat, das das eingefangene Licht an der ersten Seitenfläche (11-2) in dem Lichtleitkörper (9-2) reflektiert wird, bevor es von dort aus gesendet wird.

3. Tastenpult (1) nach Anspruch 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, das eine dritte Facette (15-3) zwischen der zweiten Facette (14-3) und einer der ersten Seitenfläche (11-3) zugewandten zweiten Seitenfläche (12-3) vorgesehen ist, wobei die dritte Facette (15-3) eine gekrümmte Oberfläche hat, die derart vorgesehen ist, daß das eingefangene Licht an der zweiten Seitenfläche (12-3) und an der ersten Seitenfläche (11-3) reflektiert wird, und zwar in dieser Reihenfolge, bevor es mit einem dritten Winkel (γ) austritt, der im wesentlichen an den zweiten Austrittswinkel (β -2) grenzt.

4. Taste (2) eines Tastenpults mit einer Ausnehmung (7) durch eine Anschlagfläche derselben, wobei diese Taste (2) einen Lichtleitkörper (9) aufweist zum Leiten von Licht von einer unterhalb der Taste (2) angeordneten Lichtquelle (8) durch den Körper (9) hindurch zu einem Beob-

achter zum Beobachten von dem Körper (9) herrührenden Lichtes, wobei der Lichtleitkörper (9) sich innerhalb der Taste (2) in einer Richtung im wesentlichen senkrecht zu der Anschlagfläche erstreckt, wobei eine obere Fläche (10) des Lichtleitkörpers (9) sich durch die Ausnehmung (7) hindurch erstreckt und im wesentlichen mit der Anschlagfläche zusammenfällt, und wobei ein Boden des Lichtleitkörpers (9) in Richtung der Lichtquelle (8) gerichtet wird, wenn die Taste (2) in dem Tastenpult (1) angeordnet ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Boden eine erste Facette (13) und eine zweite Facette (14) aufweist, wobei die erste Facette (13) eine erste Oberfläche hat, die derart gebildet ist, daß das durch die erste Facette (13) eingefangene Licht sich im wesentlichen parallel zu der ersten Seitenfläche (11) des Lichtleitkörpers (9) erstreckt, welche Fläche die Brechungsebene begrenzt, und ein erster Lichtstrahl mit einem ersten Winkel (δ) von der Oberseite (10) ausgeht und wobei die zweite Facette (14) eine zweite Fläche hat, die derart gekrümmt ist, daß ihr Brennpunkt innerhalb des Lichtleitkörpers (9) liegt, wobei der Brennpunkt eine virtuelle Lichtquelle bildet, von der ein zweiter Lichtstrahl durch die Oberseite (10) mit einem zweiten Winkel (β) ausgeht, der im wesentlichen an den ersten Winkel (δ) grenzt, wodurch das von der Lichtquelle (8) herrührende Licht in einer gewünschten Richtung ausgestrahlt wird und der Austrittswinkel größer ist als der Eintrittswinkel (α) des Lichtleitkörpers (9).

Revendications

1. Clavier (1) comprenant au moins une touche (2) qui présente un évidement vertical (7) et, à une certaine distance en dessous de l'évidement (7), dans le clavier (1), une source lumineuse (8) pour indiquer un état défini par la touche (2), un corps conduisant la lumière (9) étant agencé dans l'évidement, le corps conduisant la lumière (9) comportant une face supérieure (10) formant l'ouverture de sortie d'un faisceau lumineux provenant de la source lumineuse (8), la face supérieure (10) étant située sensiblement dans la face supérieure de la touche (2) et comportant une face inférieure dirigée vers la source lumineuse (8), caractérisé en ce que la face inférieure comprend une première facette (13) et une deuxième facette (14), la première facette (13) ayant une première surface formée, de telle sorte que la lumière admise par la première facette (13) soit dirigée en substance parallèlement à une première face latérale (11) du corps conduisant

la lumière (9) délimitant ce plan de réfraction et qu'un premier faisceau lumineux émerge de la face supérieure (10) sous un premier angle (δ), et la deuxième facette (14) ayant une deuxième surface qui est incurvée, de telle sorte qu'elle ait un point focal situé à l'intérieur du corps conduisant la lumière (9), le point focal formant une source de lumière virtuelle à partir de laquelle un deuxième faisceau de lumière émerge à travers la partie supérieure (10) selon un deuxième angle (β) en substance voisin du premier angle (δ), si bien que la lumière émanant de la source lumineuse (8) émerge dans une direction souhaitée et que l'angle de sortie excède l'angle d'entrée (α) depuis le corps conduisant la lumière (9).

2. Clavier (1) selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que la deuxième facette (14-2) a une position telle que la lumière admise soit réfléchie par la première face latérale (11-2) du corps conduisant la lumière (9-2) avant qu'elle n'en émerge.

3. Clavier (1) selon la revendication 2, caractérisé en ce qu'une troisième facette (15-3) est agencée entre la deuxième facette (14-3) et une deuxième face latérale (12-3) en regard de la première face latérale (11-3), étant entendu que la troisième facette (15-3) a une surface courbe qui est agencée de manière que la lumière admise soit réfléchie par la deuxième face latérale (12-3) et la première face latérale (11-3), dans cet ordre, avant d'émerger selon un troisième angle (γ), qui est sensiblement voisin du deuxième angle de sortie (β -2).

4. Touche de clavier (2) ayant un évidement (7) à travers sa face de frappe, cette touche (2) comprenant un corps conduisant la lumière (9) pour acheminer la lumière provenant d'une source lumineuse (8) susceptible d'être installée en dessous de la touche (2) à travers le corps (9) vers un observateur pour observer la lumière émergeant du corps (9), le corps conduisant la lumière (9) s'étendant à l'intérieur de la touche (2) dans une direction sensiblement perpendiculaire à la face de frappe, de telle sorte qu'une face supérieure (10) du corps conduisant la lumière (9) s'étende à travers l'évidement (7) et coïncide sensiblement avec la face de frappe, et une face inférieure du corps conduisant la lumière (9) est dirigée vers la source lumineuse (8) lorsque la touche (2) est montée dans le clavier (1), caractérisée en ce que la face inférieure comprend une première facette (13) et une deuxième facette (14), la première facette (13)

ayant une première surface formée, de telle sorte que la lumière admise par la première facette (13) s'étende sensiblement parallèlement à une première face latérale (11) du corps conduisant la lumière (9) bornant ce plan de réfraction et un premier faisceau lumineux émerge de la face supérieure (10) sous un premier angle (δ), et la deuxième facette (14) ayant une deuxième surface qui est incurvée, de telle sorte qu'elle ait un point focal situé à l'intérieur du corps conduisant la lumière (9), le point focal formant une source de lumière virtuelle à partir de laquelle un deuxième faisceau lumineux émerge à travers la face supérieure (10) selon un deuxième angle (β) sensiblement voisin du premier angle (δ), suite à quoi la lumière provenant de la source lumineuse (8) émerge dans une direction souhaitée et l'angle de sortie excède l'angle d'entrée (α) depuis le corps conduisant la lumière (9).

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

7

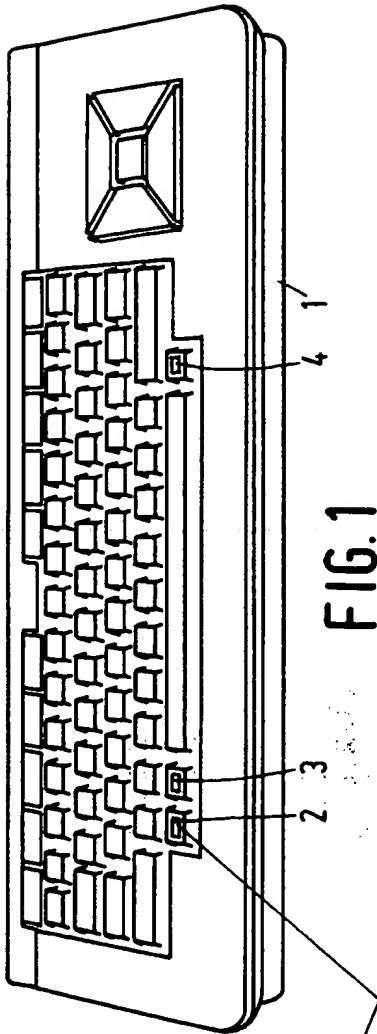


FIG. 1

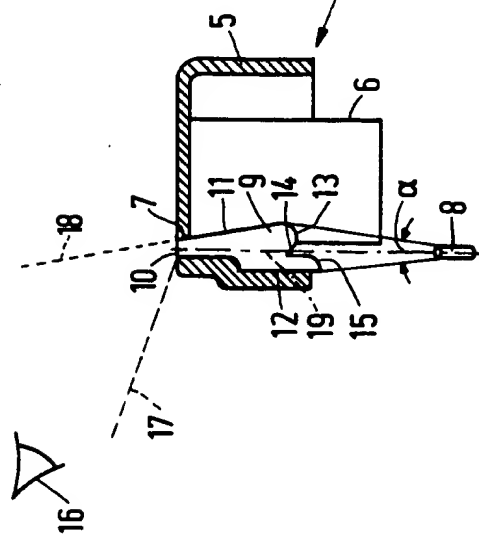


FIG. 2

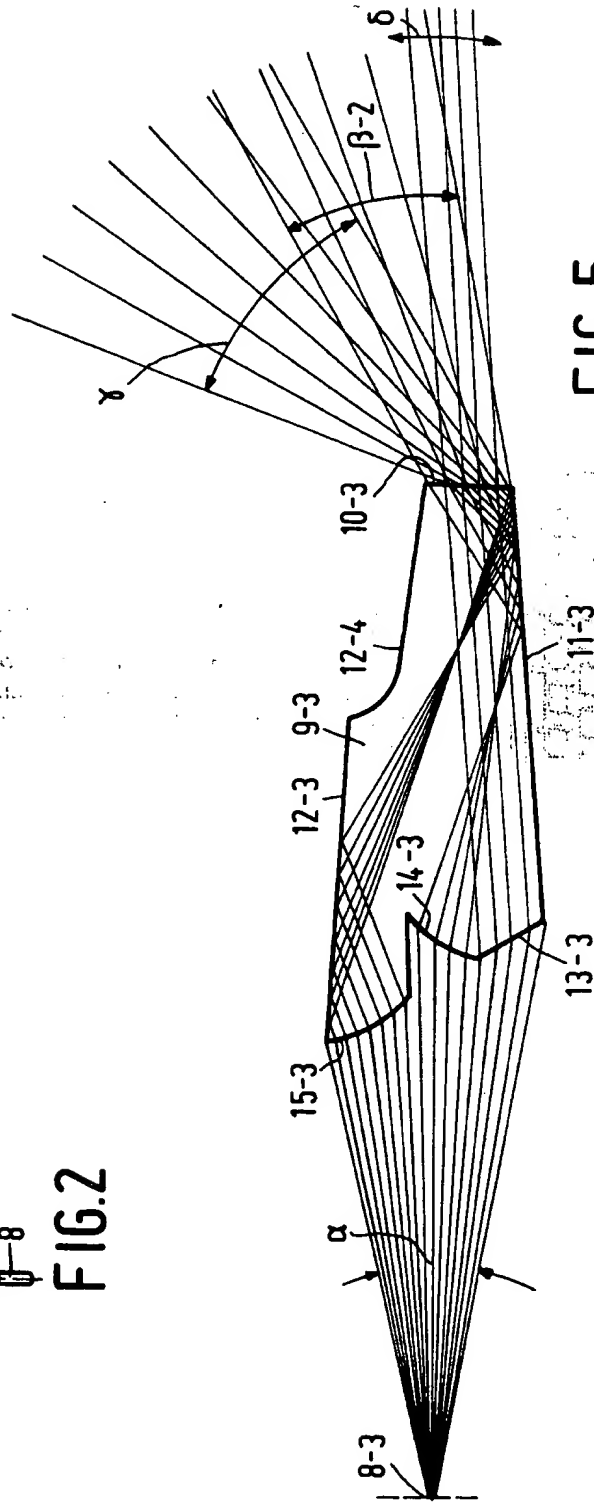


FIG. 5

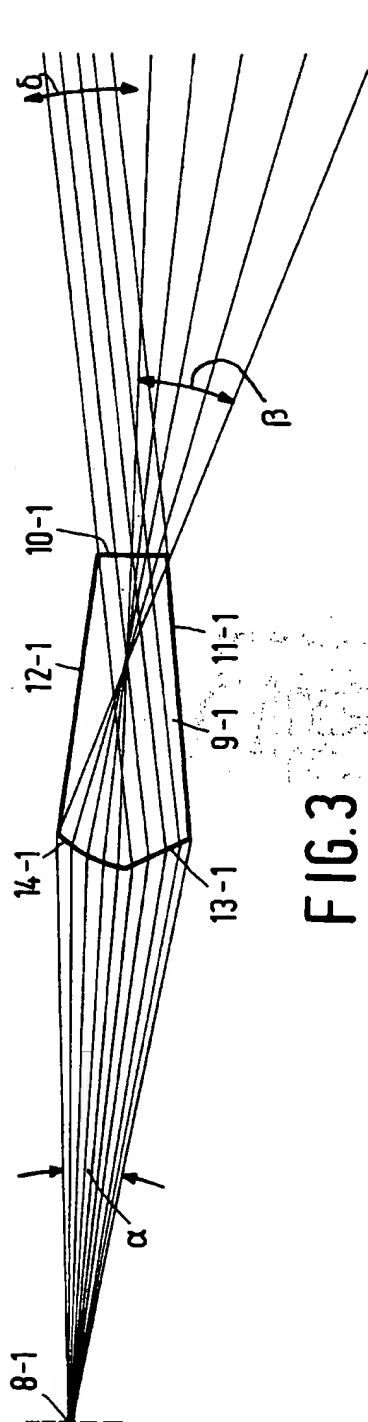


FIG. 3

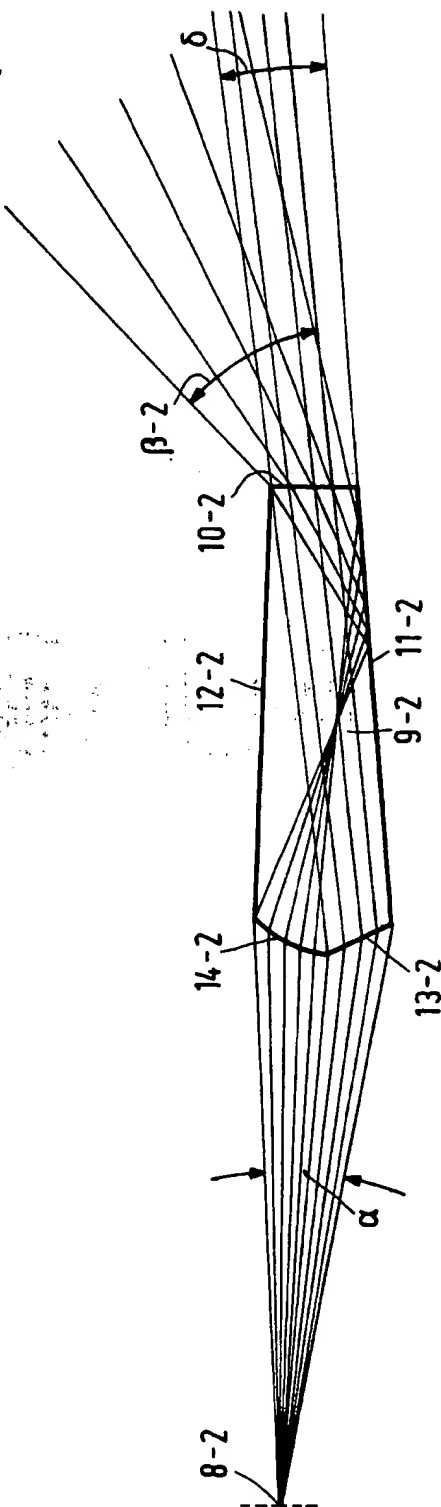


FIG. 4